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Testimony of
Ezequiel Santiago
State Representative
130th District - Bridgeport
Commerce Committee
March 6, 2014

Good morning Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone and members of the Commerce Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding **HB 5163 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDS OF THE STATE FOR THE KLEIN MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM IN THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT.**

My name is Ezequiel Santiago and I am the state representative of the 130th House District, where the Klein Memorial Auditorium is located. HB 5163 is requesting funds for the Klein Memorial in order to make the necessary capital improvements needed to attract new productions which have both lighting and sound demands the infrastructure at the Klein cannot meet. This limits their ability to reach their full potential as an economic driver in the City of Bridgeport. The staff at the Klein has done an amazing job of offering a diverse program of events and is a great example of doing more with less. They are working with the business community to ensure that visitors to the Klein are aware of the many dining, entertainment and educational amenities in the surrounding area. Bridgeport has changed from a manufacturing city to more of a destination city. The Klein's ability to bring in visitors from many of the surrounding towns and with its location in a residential neighborhood just a few blocks from a revitalized downtown is of such value.

There currently is an after school program where students, mostly from high school learn about various aspects of the performing arts. They even learn about the production aspect of putting on a live performance. I recently visited the classes and was so pleased to see so many students participating in a wide variety of exercises. What struck me the most was the fun they were having while doing so. There is no charge to students for this program. We need to support institutions such as this which put a focus on community.

Over 20 years ago, the State of Connecticut bonded 2 million dollars for the construction of a parking lot across from the Klein. It is because of this that investment and the hard work and generosity of a lot of dedicated people, that we now see crowds of people coming out to the Klein for a show. I hope this committee can see the value of this grand auditorium and vote in favor of HB 5163.

Thank you.